

## **Fall Color Report – October 14, 2021**



### **Northern Illinois**

Northern Illinois leaf watchers believe the extended dry weather and warmer-than-usual nights in the region are responsible for the slower emergence of typical October color in the woodlands. And they suspect the peak color may be a week or two behind schedule.

This week in the Quad Cities area, some hard maples and hickory trees have some good color. Some trees are dropping their leaves, including cottonwoods, walnuts, and some hard maples.

In northeast Illinois, silver maples are changing to bright yellow, red maples are changing to red, and honey locusts are showing more yellow.

Over the last week, hickory started changing to yellow and brown, and there are a few white oaks changing to brown. Sumac is deep red in many locales this week.

In some parts of northeast Illinois, black oaks are starting to show yellowish gold on isolated branches. Sassafras is sporadically done, while other areas not exposed to excessive wind remain in golds and reds. Fringe trees are starting to yellow. Common witch hazel is yellowing up. Shingle oak is just beginning to turn shades of orangish-red, mixed with green.

Hackberries are yellowing further, but still have hues of green. White oaks have a few leaves turning early, mostly a buckskin color. Some plums are beginning to color nicely, while others remain green. Hickories are just beginning their stunning show of gold, however we're most likely still a week or two away from the real show. White pines are dropping their old needles, creating a carpet of yellow to tan needles beneath their canopies. Persimmons are starting to blush from green to yellow-apricot.



### **Central Illinois**

Even in the more northern reaches of central Illinois, colors are still mainly green with some yellow and a lot of fallen leaves, probably due to the extended dry weather that eased with some rainfall this week.

Oaks are very green. Red oaks are starting to drop their acorns. Hickory, hackberry, sugar maple, walnut, elm, ironwood, redbud, and cottonwood trees are all in various shades of light green to yellow. The warmer-than-usual weather, coupled with bursts of rain, have resulted in fall mushroom activity. Bright orange sulfur shelf and white puff balls are easily seen along with many others.



Most of the wild sugar maples are showing yellow instead of oranges and reds, though there are some scattered individuals with those colors. Hickory nuts and walnuts are dropping heavily, especially on stormy, windy days.

In west central Illinois, the walnuts are turning bright yellow and leaves are dropping quickly. White ash trees are showing some nice bits of purple, while green ash leaves are yellowing and dropping. Sycamores are yellow/brown, oaks are barely turning, and maples are just starting the fall transition in some areas. Sassafras is showing the most color. Understory plants are starting to turn yellow and brown with leaves dropping. Ironwoods are showing mostly shades of brown.

Between the Illinois River and Mississippi River, cottonwoods, silver maples, walnuts, pawpaw, Osage orange, mulberries, catalpas, and buckeyes are starting to yellow. Sugar maples and ash are starting to show yellow, red, gold, purple and orange. Oaks are still stubbornly holding green.

Sweet gum trees are turning beautiful red and orange in middle counties in central Illinois, but the peak colors are still at least two weeks away.

In east central Illinois, leaf watchers are still seeing yellow in the black walnuts, persimmons are still showing yellow and orange (although many have dropped their leaves), and occasional hickories and sugar maples are showing yellow and orange.



### **Southern Illinois**

Foliage in most of southern Illinois remains largely green with the yellowing of leaves in some tree species. Brown and red hues are minimal and just beginning to show. Overall, fall colors are minimal to moderate along the Mississippi River bluff lands.



In some southern counties, bottomland trees and understory trees are starting to turn yellow and orange with a few reds and purples mixed in. There are bright yellow colors in elm, pawpaw, maple, sycamore, basswood, and tulip poplar trees, with red/purple colors in sassafras, black gum, and Virginia creeper vines.

Between Carlyle Lake and Rend Lake, some yellow-orange color is finally starting in sugar maples, but they are still a way off from the peak. Sassafras and persimmon are showing yellow, orange, and red hues especially on the edges of woods and in early successional areas. Sumacs have picked up this week with some bright red color on the edges of woods and in prairie plantings.

Bottomland forests are getting more yellow with sycamore, cottonwood and some remaining leaves on ash and walnut trees. Oaks for the most part are sticking with normal green color. Hickories have begun to turn yellow and brown this past week. There are some good-looking New England asters showing purple tints among the prairies that are browning. There is some yellow left but waning fast in the goldenrods that are present. Cooler weather at night should give a boost to the colors.

Farther east, the sweet gums are starting to turn yellow and red, and a few of the sassafras are starting to turn yellow and red.

In Giant City State Park this week, red maples are really stepping up with their bright red leaves. Sweet gums are starting to turn brilliant shades of purple, red and yellow.



The show at Cache River State Natural Area includes sweet gums that are still green with a few showing yellow, red, dark red maples. Black/sour gums have red leaves over 1/3 on most trees. Tulip poplar and sycamore have yellow leaves over a third on most trees. Bald cypress are orange/red brown and copper. Black walnuts have yellow leaves among the leaves that haven't fallen.

In southeast Illinois, color watchers have noticed that the cedars, the only common conifer in southern Illinois, will remain green throughout the fall and winter, and the females have bright blue berries. In addition, sumac, sassafras, and black gum have been showing some bright red and yellow hues. Walnuts have lost 50-75 percent of their leaves, and while oaks and maples are still green.